RECOLLECTIONS
OF
"OLD" SWINTON
(LANCASHIRE).

BY
PETER HOLLAND.

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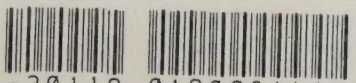

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RECOLLECTIONS

OF

"OLD" SWINTON

(LANCASHIRE).

BY

PETER HOLLAND.

WITH INTRODUCTION BY REV. ALFRED HARDY.

SWINTON, LANCS.:
W. PEARSON,
149, CHORLEY ROAD,
1914.

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To my Old Friend

SAMUEL RAWLINSON,

THESE

"Recollections of 'Old' Swinton"

ARE CORDIALLY DEDICATED,

WITH MUCH ESTEEM.

The Author.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE writing of these "Recollections of 'Old' Swinton" has been on the part of the Author a "labour of love." No idea of personal profit or fame has had any place in his mind. Should any profits accrue from the publication of this little volume, they will be devoted to the funds of the local Nursing Association.

The respected Author of these "Recollections" is one of the oldest and best known residents in Swinton, having carried on a business of watchmaker and jeweller in the same place for upwards of 60 years. His memory, and that of his old friends and acquaintances, goes back to a time when Swinton was a very different place from what it is to-day, as will be seen from the following pages. He has seen Swinton grow from a mere hamlet, of a few hundred inhabitants, to its present dimensions and population of about 18,000. For many years it has been the Author's habit to make notes of those old times and scenes, the substance of which is here presented to the reader. Mr. Holland is also an amateur artist. Some of the old scenes of Swinton, that have long since passed away, he has preserved in oil paintings of considerable merit, reproductions of which embellish and enhance the interest and worth of this volume.

The Author has also frequently lectured on "Old Swinton," and often been requested to publish his reminiscences.

There are few of the present inhabitants of Swinton who will remember much of the times of which Mr. Holland writes—many are comparatively new comers—yet we believe they will

find in these "Recollections" much to interest and amuse, and cause them "furiously to think"; but to the children of old Swintonians this little book will have a peculiar and an abiding interest.

In editing these "Recollections" for my old friend the Author, many quaint and tender memories have been stirred within me. As far as my memory goes, and from what I recollect of what my parents, grand-parents, and other old inhabitants have told me, I believe the following pages contain a faithful and unvarnished description of the scenes and doings of those "good old days." My little part in the production of this volume has been chiefly of a literary and grammatical character, having to do with the form and not with the substance of its pages. I have endeavoured to interfere as little as possible with the Author telling his own story, in his own way.

ALFRED HARDY

"The Manse,"
Birkenshaw,
Bradford,
Yorks.

SWINTON IN 1840. (FROM A PAINTING BY THE AUTHOR.)

Recollections of "Old" Swinton.

"Old times have changed,
Old manners gone."

A FEW centuries ago the neighbourhood of Swinton for miles around was known as Hodgs Common. In the fifteenth century what is called "The Partition" took place between Lady Coventry and the people who then lived at Worsley Old Hall and Agecroft Hall, the original Deed of Partition being deposited at Agecroft Hall. I am indebted to Mr. Widdowson for this information—who, looking through some old deeds of property he was transferring, came across the papers referred to. But "Swine Moor," or "Swinton Moor," it was also called for a long time, for we read in Hollingworth's "History of Manchester" how that the King's troops came and encamped on "Swinton Moor" during the time of the "Great Rebellion" in Manchester—which caused much consternation to the people of those days. Some evidence of Swinton being called a "Moor" still remains in the names "Moor Lane" and "Moor Side."

Mr. Paton is of the opinion that Swinton took its name from a Danish Chief called "Sweyn," who, in those far-off days, pitched his camp here. To-day we have the following names of places lending some little colour to this belief:—"The Danes," "Danes Fields,"

and " Danes Brow," now called " Dale's Brow." This derivation of the name he expressed to a pupil named Harry L. Butterworth.

Mr. Butterworth (this young gentleman's father), wishing for further information, wrote to his friend, Mr. Henry Brierley, of the Lancashire Parish Register Society, Wigan, who sent the following reply :—

" *The Place-name Swinton.*—To speak positively as to the meaning of any place-name is always dangerous, unless you have all the oldest spellings before you—say, eleventh century spellings or earlier. Now, I am unable to find any very early spellings of Swinton, except a comparatively early one—' Swynton '—and I am inclined to think that, much as I should like to have supported your son's view, the ' Swine ' origin of the name is the more likely. Your son will know that a large part of the possessions of any farmer, in the old days, were pigs. The Anglo-Saxon authors abound with evidences of this, and so I am inclined to think that just as we have ' Horse Croft,' ' Cow-ley,' ' Pigs-lee,' and many similar names, so ' Swinton ' may mean ' Swine enclosure.' It is true that the Anglo-Saxon word had the long vowel, but modern haste shortens everything it can lay hands on."

I well remember, where the Industrial Schools now stand, an old farm, with barns and stables and the usual outbuildings, along with about five cottages. In 1840 it was called " Kay Fold," or " Kay Fowt."

In 1842 the foundation stones of the *Swinton Industrial Schools* were laid. At that time a great majority of the people had no idea what the building to be erected was going to be, and a good deal of speculation and curiosity was aroused. Some guessed it was

to be a prison—where criminals would be hanged. Others that it was to be a "Bastile," like the famous French prison. This name has stuck to it to this day, especially amongst the older inhabitants.

Elias Dorning, C.E., tells me, his father has coursed hares over the ground upon which this wonderful building now stands, "in the good old days."

It is said that Charles Dickens once visited these Schools, about the time that he was becoming famous as a novelist. Also, that Tom Sayers, the notorious boxer, worked as a bricksetter's labourer on these buildings, and left to train for his big fight with Jack Heenan for the championship, which he won. One or two very eminent musicians have also been brought up and educated in these Schools.

Many of the *names of the different parts of Swinton* have greatly changed during the last few years. "The Valley" was originally called "Throstle Grove"; then "Back-o'-Jonathan's"—because Jonathan Dorning kept the White Lion Inn in front; it is now called "Valley Below."

"Folly Lane" takes its name from the act of a certain man building a three-storey house in that neighbourhood —the top storey of which was meant for a malt kiln. People came from far and near to behold his "folly"—so the Lane took its name.

What is now known as "Chorley Road," in front of the Industrial Schools, was once called "The Hillock," with a prefix too vulgar to mention.

Mr. Sagar, who in those days kept the chemist shop at the corner of Station Road, endeavoured to change its name by putting up a sign-board, calling it "John Dalton Street." His neighbour, Mr. Benton, who kept

a grocer's shop a few yards farther down the road, insisted on its being called "Market Street." The local authorities were called in to settle the matter, and finding in some old deeds of property that it was called "Chorley Road," that name was given, and remains to this day. This was the old mail-coach road to Lancaster, and I believe Swinton was the first stop from Manchester, the coach always halting at the Bull's Head.

"Station Road" in those early days had no pavement or side stones. I have often seen donkeys and ponies turned into it to pasture. It was originally called "Burying Lane." The reason for this is stated to be as follows:—Previous to the year 1792 there were no burial grounds in Swinton, Pendlebury, or Clifton. All funerals had to go to Eccles, and most of them would be obliged to pass down this road. Hence the name.

It was the custom for the relatives of a deceased person to send to Eccles for the bier, which was kept by the Parish Clerk, who was a publican, and it was customary to spend a shilling in drink as compensation for the trouble occasioned. There were always plenty of men ready to go for the sake of having the shilling to spend in drink. In those days, the mourners walked and carried the corpse, very few being able to ride or afford a hearse. The Parish of Eccles, in which Swinton then was, boasted the possession of two hearses—"the best," which could only be used on special occasions, and the "second-best," which could be hired—the persons doing so having to provide their own horses. This was seldom done, except for funerals from such out-landish places as "Egypt" (round about Clifton Junction).

THE OLD CHURCH, SWINTON. (SEE PAGE 16.)

In Clifton it was the custom when a death occurred "to go a-laithing"—that is, inviting people to the funeral. They would begin at "Unity Brook" and go to the extreme end of Clifton, calling at every house and giving an invitation—not one must be missed. The person "going a laithing" always said the same words, which were something like the following:—"So and so desires you to come to the funeral of So and so on such and such a day; and have you any green stuff"—meaning "box" or "rosemary"—"if so, you must bring a supply with you." Each man would be expected to wear a sprig in his button hole, and each woman a piece in her breast. These sprigs of box or rosemary were cast into the grave at the words "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Before the funeral left the house it was customary to serve the mourners with hot and cold ale in quart pots. The handles of the pot containing the warm ale were wrapped with lemon peel, the handles of the other pot being bare. These two pots were carried round, and each person drank out of the same pot, warm or cold, as they preferred. They were also served with currant-buns, with a cross on, exactly like the hot-cross-buns of to-day. These were called "burying cakes," and were generally carried home for the children.

At the graveside it would be announced that they were all invited to such and such a public house, where ale and bread and cheese would be provided. Many would stay at the tavern some hours, others not returning home till the next day. Instead of coaches, sometimes a couple of spring carts would be requisitioned, carrying as many as they would hold. I have seen the coffin of a child carried on horse back, on the knees of the rider, the mourners following in procession on foot.

In those days it was the same with all the *weddings*. Everybody had to go to Eccles to be married.

These weddings were a great contrast to those of to-day; but, like the funerals, they nearly all had to pass down Burying Lane—so that the road might as fittingly have been called Wedding Lane.

There would be from eight to twenty couples generally at a wedding—men and women, arm in arm; each man in a tall hat, ancient and modern. Many of the men would wear knee-breeches and fancy stockings, with a profusion of coloured ribbons at the knees and tied around their hats. The women would be dressed as gaily. They would come dancing along the road as merrily as possible—not in the genteel fashion of to-day with carriages and pairs, but in "a gradely homely way"—walking, dancing, and singing to the Church. The most favourite day for marriages was Monday. These wedding processions would always be accompanied by a person playing a fiddle, and sometimes another playing a tin whistle, to the tunes of which they danced and walked. Not infrequently one would carry "a chamber utensil" on a stick, decorated with coloured ribbons. This would head the procession, and at almost every public house they came to they would have it filled with ale. Each person must drink, and if any refused he had to pay for it to be filled again.

After the wedding, recourse would be had to the public house, where a good dinner would be provided, and where they would spend the rest of the day eating and drinking. Many people would stand at the street corners as they passed, and call out their good wishes after the manner of those times.

"Jane Lane" (so called after a popular old character of that name), now named "Swinton Hall Road,"

previous to 1850 was called "Old Swinton," and was never known by any other name. It was but a very small place at one time, but has gradually grown to considerable dimensions. Originally a man of the name of Bury, lived at Old Swinton. The field around his house was called "Bury's Field." The lane from Pendlebury to Swinton, which went past the house, was called "Bury Lane." The proprietor, objecting to the lane passing so near his house, made another road at the farther side of the field, which was called "Bury Field's Road"—afterwards it became known as "Bury Stiles." To-day it is called "Park Avenue."

A good story is told of old Mr. Bury. On one occasion he invited some friends to dine with him. Amongst the guests was one who could not control his appetite, but began helping himself before "Grace" had been said. The host administered a mild rebuke when he arose to ask a blessing. "For what we are about to receive—and for what Mr. So-and-So has already received, may the Lord make us truly thankful. Amen!"

The original *Swinton Hall* was built and inhabited by old Mr. Chadwick. The new, or later hall was built by his son Elias Chadwick near the old hall. It was afterwards occupied by Thomas Stuttard, Esq., J.P., as a cloth warehouse or storeroom, but has since been pulled down.

The following quaint story of old Mr. Chadwick is worth relating, as casting a light upon the doings of those old times:—Being in Manchester on business on one occasion (he was a Manchester merchant), and sitting in the old "Seven Stars" public house, either

drunk or pretending to be asleep, two gentlemen came in, and supposing him to be asleep began to talk about a certain ship which would arrive in Liverpool that night, and where they were going next day to purchase the cargo of cotton the ship had brought. The old man was neither so drunk nor so fast asleep as not to hear all that was said and to understand the situation. Rising up, he made for home, and on arriving he said to his coachman: "John, yoke 'Captain' in the gig!" "Why, master, where are you going at this hour of the night?" John asked. "We are going to Liverpool!" was the reply. John was amazed and puzzled, but did as he was told. As they were returning next morning they met the same two gentlemen driving to Liverpool. They remarked to each other "We are done!" And so they were, for old Chadwick had bought the cargo of cotton, and cleared the sum of thirty-six thousand pounds. The old horse 'Captain,' which had gone through the Battle of Waterloo, was pensioned off after that.

The postal arrangements of those days were far different from what they are to-day. There was only one post office for the whole of the district of Swinton, Pendlebury, and Clifton. It was kept at first at the "Bull's Head" Inn, and remained there so long as it was legal to be at a public-house. From the "Bull's Head" it was removed to John Howard's (a blacksmith living hard by). At the death of John Howard it was taken over by Fanny Howard, near the old Parsonage. During Fanny Howard's time the penny postage came into being, when letters not exceeding half an ounce could be sent to any part of the Kingdom for one penny. Letters sent through the post were delivered from Swinton to Unity Brook and down to Clifton House on one side, and as far as Agecroft

Bridge on the other. Sometimes they would keep letters waiting two or three days to see if any more would come for the same neighbourhood before they would take them, and sometimes if a neighbour were going in the direction they would give him the letters to deliver on his way, the party thus taking the letters, be he post official or not, would receive a penny for every letter delivered.

The Water Supply of Swinton before the year 1868 consisted of two wells, called "Bridget Holt's Wells." They were situated about midway up Granville Street, on the right-hand side, about fifty yards wide of the street. The road to them is still open. When the houses in Granville Street were built the road was left, but the wells were filled up.

Often have I seen people waiting for hours, sometimes all night, for water springing that they might get a can full. Besides these wells, there were pumps in different parts of the village. One at "Old Chadwick's," which was open from seven to eight o'clock each morning; one at the "Bull's Head"—Belshaw's pump—and one at Richard Lansdale's. At this latter one a small charge was levied for the use of it, and it was no uncommon thing to see a notice on the pump reminding the users of this fact. When the water began to run short, "Old Lobby John," of Moorside Lane, who had a water-spring in his garden, came round with a huge barrel on wheels, drawn by a horse, with a little bell which he rang as he cried: "Water to sell! Water to sell! A halfpenny a can!" and for many years he earned a livelihood in this way. In 1868 the Manchester Corporation came to the rescue with "laid on water," since when there has been no scarcity of this precious commodity.

The Old Church at Swinton was a plain oblong brick building. It was built as a Chapel of Ease, and was under the control of Eccles Parish Church. If I remember rightly, it was closed one Sunday in the year, that the Swinton people might attend Divine worship at the Parish Church at Eccles. Swinton was freed from Eccles and became a separate parish on Monday, February 13th, 1865. On two sides of the Church and the west end there were galleries. All the pews were rented by the parishioners, but under the galleries, on either side, the seats were free—the men sitting on one side and the women on the other. The pulpit was an old-fashioned "three-decker," and at the back of it stood the Communion Table. In 1838 the Church was enlarged, two side wings being added. The east window, before the Communion Table, was of beautiful stained glass, and was presented by Mr. Elias Chadwick. The Church-wardens' staffs which are used at the present time were also given by Mr. Chadwick. The Church was illuminated by candles, which the Beadle snuffed periodically. Many trees and ivy were planted after the enlargement, which caused a considerable amount of heartburning, as some believed the Scriptures forbade such a thing. On the top of the belfry was placed a large gilt cross, which often led strangers to imagine it was a Roman Catholic place of worship. Before the organ was erected the singing was led by fiddles and clarionettes and other instruments, the scholars and musicians sitting in the west-end gallery of the Church. On the first Sunday of each month, being the day set apart for Holy Communion, a dole of bread was given to the poor, some getting one, two, or three loaves, according to the size of their families. This distribution was at the close of the morning service.

REV. ROBERT BROADLEY.

(SEE PAGE 18.)

Before the introduction of the police, the Churchwardens acted in that capacity. During the service they would walk through the village, with long silver-headed staffs, which the Church supplied, to see if they could find anyone breaking the law. If they discovered anyone drunk (which was no uncommon occurrence), they would march him to Church, or summon him before the Court, and have him fined. Sometimes one caught drunk would be allowed to go to bed, get sober, and if he put in an appearance at the afternoon service he would escape a summons, and maybe a fine as well. These Churchwardens generally got back to Church in time for the sermon.

In those days the Old Church was well attended, there being few other Churches near. It was quite a common sight to see the road filled with the conveyances of the gentry who had come to worship. There were only two bells in the belfry, and I well remember the day when the Duke of Wellington was buried, a cold sleety day in November, old Joseph Chester sat up in the Tower, tolling the "minute-bell" with a hammer. Having occasion to see to the clock, I asked him how long he had to sit up there? He said "Till twelve o'clock." I said "Give it a blow, and come down and I will finish it for you." He said, "I will, for it is very cold up here." An interesting coincidence I will here relate. My father was one of the four men who carried the remains of Mr. Huskinson, who was killed on the day the railway was opened between Liverpool and Manchester. The corpse was brought from Park Side to Eccles, then carried to the Vicarage. The Duke of Wellington, being on the train, shook hands with the carriers, bidding them carry him very carefully. Mr. Huskinson was the Member of Parliament who

brought in the Bill for the first railway, and got it passed. The two bells in the belfry were used, one for the clock and the other for calling worshippers to the Church. Psalm singing was a great part of the service, and I well remember the old Clerk giving out to be sung the 119th Psalm, instead of the 19th. One of the Churchwardens hurried up the steps of the pulpit to acquaint him with his mistake, when he at once corrected the error in the following manner :—" Let us sing to the praise and glory of God, the 19th Psalm with the *Gloria Patri.*" The moment he had given out the Psalm he would sit down, close his eyes, and fall asleep, and often the congregation had to wait for the " Amen ! "

Up to the year 1833 the Rev. Mr. Nuttall was the " Curate-in-Charge." He lived in the house afterwards occupied by the late Noah Robinson ; three old houses then stood where the stable now stands. It was in one of these old houses where the first Sunday school was held, and remained for some time till the schools were built. The lower room of the schools served for the infants as a day school during the week and a Sunday school on the Sabbath. The upper room was let to Mr. Luke Smith as a more advanced school. These schools were built by public subscription. When they were finished, the Sunday school, having been firmly established, was removed from " Parson's Fowt " to the new schools nearer the Church.

After the death of Mr. Nuttall the Rev. Robert Broadley was appointed. He became very popular with the parishioners, being a good, broad-minded, and genial man. He was also quite a musician and a phrenologist, and many parents sought his advice in regard to their children's future. Here is an instance ;

when Elias Dorning was a boy at home, Mr. Jonathan Dorning, his father, told Mr. Broadley he was about to put his son to learn the butchering business. "Nay! nay! nay!" said Mr. Broadley, "he must be a civil engineer, and he will do something," which he did, for he was the engineer who built the railway through Swinton.

Mr. Broadley composed many anthems, which were sung in the Church, and he brought his choir to great perfection, it being famous for miles around. He also composed music to a song entitled: "*The Land of Love and Roses,*" which attained some fame. The following story is told of Mr. Broadley:—Shortly after he came to Swinton a vacancy occurred for an organist, either at St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey. Mr. Broadley, for a little excitement, applied for the position under an assumed name. He was one of a few chosen to go up to London to play before the authorities, when he had to drop the fun and make himself known. He was good company, and would sing a song with the best. I once heard him sing "Sally in our Alley" with great gusto. In one of his merry moods, meeting my old friend John Evans, who at the time lived close to the Vicarage, and was rather slow at getting married, he enquired when he was going to take to himself a wife? John replied he was in no hurry. Mr. Broadley said "Well, John, if you will get married I'll find you a wife, and marry you for nothing."

In the spring of 1863 a pair of throstles built their nest near the Church. The male bird sat on the cross on the top of the belfry every morning and sang, to the great delight of the people, many coming from a distance to see and hear it, especially on a Sunday morning,

but, I am sorry to say, some hard-hearted wretch shot the bird, and the people who came to see it the following Sunday, hearing the news, would have murdered him had they known who he was, they were so angry. Years rolled away before it was found out who the culprit was, when the circumstance was almost forgotten, which was well for him that it was so.

After the death of Mr. Broadley the Rev. Henry Robinson Heywood took charge of the parish, and remained there until his death. During Mr. Heywood's term many great changes were effected. His first move was to get the Church separated from the Eccles Parish and made a parish of itself. This, as we have said, was in February, 1865. Then he set about to build the present noble Church, one of the finest to be found in the County Palatine. His next great task was to build in remote parts of the parish, schools, and at Moorside a Church. Some of these serve as day and Sunday schools, and are also used for Divine worship on the Lord's Day. Then he freed all the seats in the Church. This was no easy task, for the old parishioners had always had their family pews, and did not relish the idea of so drastic a change. But at last he accomplished it, after, as I am informed, he had invested £3,000 to endow the Church to make up any deficiency that might occur through the loss of the pew rents. A short time before his death Mr. Heywood was made Honorary Canon of Manchester Cathedral. When he died he was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Birley. After Mr. Birley came the Rev. Mr. Boddington, who got subscriptions sufficient to build the new schools and the new vicarage. The work proving too heavy for Mr Boddington's strength, he left, and the late Canon Heywood's son, the Rev. B. O. F. Heywood, became the present Vicar.

Besides the Church of England, several *Nonconformist Churches* have been established in Swinton for a long period, the Wesleyan Methodists celebrating their Centenary in Swinton in 1909. The work began in a cottage about the close of the 18th century, the first chapel being built in 1809 on the site of the present handsome Church in Station Road. In those days the Old Church was called the " Bottom Chapel," and the Wesleyan Church the " Top Chapel."

The Unitarians have also been long established on Swinton Hall Road. Their first meeting place was in a stable yard behind Pendlebury House, during the time that James Aspinal Turner, Esq., M.P., lived there. I believe during that time a minister lived in Swinton, but for some cause, unknown to me, the congregation broke up. Sometime afterwards the remnants of the former cause began again to meet for worship in a room over a stable at the back of the White Lion Inn. In those days they suffered considerable persecution, being pelted with rotten eggs and the like. This kept many of the faint-hearted ones from joining them. After this the services were removed to the house of Mr. Wm. Boardman, of Temple Lodge Farm, who was at that time the leader and superintendent of the Unitarian body. On anniversary days, if the weather were favourable, the services would be held in the open air ; if wet, in the barn. The christening of children at Mr. Boardman's house, by Mr. Boardman, was a very common occurrence. Mr. Boardman was a good, kind-hearted Christian gentleman, and highly respected by all who knew him. He often preached to the Congregation, and his sermons were always much appreciated. After this, they built a School in Jane Lane, near the Roman Catholic Chapel. Over the door there was a stone, on which were cut the words :—" *To us, there is but one God, the Father.*"

Services were regularly held here on Sundays, and were conducted by students and ministers by arrangement. Amongst some who came to preach were Dr. Beard and Rev. Wm. Gaskell (husband of Mrs. Gaskell, the novelist), Mr. Boardman often taking the services. In 1857 the foundation stones of the present Church and Schools in Swinton Hall Road were laid by James Aspinal Turner, Esq., M.P., since when the work has gone on under the care of many different ministers.

Many of the *old customs* in Swinton seem to be either dead or dying out. For two or three weeks before Easter it used to be a prevalent custom for boys and girls to go "*a-pace-egging.*" The boys would dress in girls' clothes and the girls in boys', and each would be disguised with masks, except the old "Toss Pot," whose face would be blackened. Each one would carry a stout club ; being about six to ten in number, they would go from house to house, giving the door a loud rap with the club. When the door was opened they would not allow it to be closed again until they had been given some coppers. Nothing less than one penny would suffice. The leader would not utter a word save "pace-egg." He would keep knocking and saying "pace-egg" until he got what he wanted. When one lot of "pace-eggers" met another lot, sometimes a fight would ensue.

The custom always ended on "Good Friday." That day all the children would turn out with small baskets, in which was a little hay, calling at shops, farmhouses, and gentlemen's residences for eggs, or small treacle cakes, or pence. Some of the lads would resort to all kinds of tricks to get a second gift, changing caps and jackets, &c. Sometimes it succeeded, and sometimes they got what they did not expect. By noon these little

THE OLD WESLEYAN CHAPEL (EXTERIOR).

SEE PAGE 21.)

"pace-eggers" would return with quite an assortment of cakes, eggs, &c.

In the afternoon the "*Ribboners*" would set out—six or eight young men, gaily dressed, with a great profusion of coloured ribbons adorning their persons—armed with tin swords, to play "St. George and the Turk." The following is something like what they used to repeat:—

"In comes I, bold Slasher,
So let no more be said;
For if I draw my sword,
I'm sure to break thy head."

The Turk:

"How canst thou break mine head,
Since my head is made of iron,
My body made of steel,
My hands and feet of knuckle bone—
I challenge thee to feel."

Then would follow a duel with swords, and St. George would fall. Here would enter the far-travelled doctor, saying:—

"Take a little of my bottle,
And let it down thy throttle.
Arise, St. George, and fight again!"

He arises and slays the Turk.

Here enters another personage—

"In comes I, Beelzebub,
And in my hand I carry a club.
Money I want, and money I crave,
If you don't give me money
I'll sweep you all into the grave."

"The old Tosspot," or fool, then comes in with his blackened face, a number of small bells on his clothes, and a bladder at the end of a stick in which are a few peas to make it rattle. He comes jumping about, making his jokes, and beating the bystanders back. A

fiddler then strikes up some merry tune, at which they all join singing and dancing, during which time the "Tosspot" takes the coppers, extorting as much as he can by his jokes.

Occasionally, something like the following would happen :—A set of youths, knowing where an old horse was buried, would dig up the skeleton head. They would then fasten the bottom jaw in its place by means of a wire through the joint, so that they could open and close the mouth, placing the bottoms of two soda water bottles in the eye sockets for eyes. One of them would carry this on his head, dressed in sacks or calf skin, and visit all the public houses in the village, and running the head at different persons in the company, endeavour to bite them. They would sing and drink, and often fight. All this on Good Friday afternoon, until late at night, when they would return home drunk.

During the early part of last century, say up to 1870, it was the custom to go "*May singing.*" This custom seems to be of very ancient date, for in conversation with old people when I was but a youth they could remember, as far as they could look back, the "May Singers."

A company of "May Singers" would number about five or six, with a fiddler and sometimes other musical instrument players. They would go round and sing at various gentlemen's residences and public houses during the month of April the following songs :—

"All in this pleasant evening, together come are we,
For the summer springs so fresh, green, and gay—
We'll tell you of a blossom that buds on every tree,
Drawing near to the merry month of May.

Rise up, the Master of this house, put on your chain of gold,
For the summer springs so fresh, green, and gay—
We hope you're not offended, with your house we make so bold.
Drawing near to the merry month of May.

Rise up, ye Mistress of this house, with gold along your breast,
For the Summer springs so fresh, green, and gay—
And if your body be asleep, I hope your soul's at rest.
Drawing near to the merry month of May.

Rise up, the children of this house, all in your rich attire,
For the Summer springs so fresh, green, and gay—
For every hair upon your head shines like the silver wire.
Drawing near to the merry month of May.

God bless this house and harbour, your riches, and your store,
For the Summer springs so fresh, green, and gay—
We hope the Lord will prosper you, both now and evermore.
Drawing near to the merry month of May.

So now we're going to leave, in peace and plenty here,
For the Summer springs so fresh, green, and gay—
We shall not sing you May again until another year,
For to draw you these cold winter days away."

The second song, "The Basiers" (a corruption of bear's ear—), which is the Lancashire name for "Auriculas" (Latin, Auricula—ear—the flower), is said to have been composed by a Swinton man.

"Come and listen awhile unto what we shall say,
Concerning the season, the month we call May.
For the flowers they are springing, and the birds they do sing,
And the Basiers are sweet, in the morning of May.

When the trees are in bloom, and the meadows are green,
The sweet smelling cowslips are plain to be seen;
The sweet ties of Nature, which we plainly do say,
For the Basiers are sweet, in the morning of May.

All creatures are deemed in their station below,
Such comforts of love on each other bestow;
Our flocks they are folded, and young lambs sweetly play,
And Basiers are sweet, in the morning of May.

So now, to conclude with much freedom and love,
The sweetest of blessings proceed from above;
Let us join in our song, that right happy may we be,
For we're blessed with contentment in the morning of May."

The music for these songs may be found in Chambers' "Book of Days" for the month of April. "The May Singers" always ended on the evening of April 30th.

Another custom, that has long been abandoned, was known as "*Riding th' Stang.*" This was a way of shaming people who had done wrong. Previous to the introduction of the police, when anyone had committed an offence, the people took the law into their own hands and punished the guilty party by "Riding th' Stang" for them. A half-dozen men would ride through the village, beating drums or tin cans. The cart would halt at certain places, when they would proclaim the disgrace of the parties who had done wrong, something in the following way :—

"Tammy, ran tan tan!
You can tell by the sound of this old can,
That one of our good neighbour's wives has beaten her good man!
She neither took hammer, nor sword, nor pistol,
But with her two fists she swore she'd take his life—
Tammy, ran tan tan!"

Then they would announce the guilty persons' names and the circumstances connected with it. This "Riding th' Stang" generally ended in drunkenness.

In those old times *the people of Swinton were somewhat superstitious*, and believed in ghosts, or "boggarts," as they called them. There was the "Stone-acre" boggart and the boggart at old "Lobby John's" in Red Cat Lane. The story of the latter is as follows :—That once an old shoemaker lived there, who had an apprentice, whom he murdered and buried in the garden, and it was the spirit of this murdered boy which was the boggart. Then there was a boggart at Fildes' Fold Farm. Old Johnny Fildes, the farmer, was much annoyed by trespassers, who injured his crops, so he adopted the plan of frightening the people by taking a white table cloth or bed sheet, and with a big stick walking about the fields with the sheet thrown over him. This proved

effective until "Owd Iron-legged Bill" came along and said: "He would see what sort o' stuff the boggart was made on." He gave the ghost such a thrashing that it never made its appearance again.

A man of the name of Jack Wright, a shoemaker, and an infidel, a member of the "Hall of Science" in Knott Mill, Manchester, boasted that he did not believe in the nonsense that a good many others did. About this time it was firmly believed by many that certain persons had sold their souls to the devil. But Jack did not credit anything of the sort, and to put him to the test a bet was made that he dared not walk round a certain place where four roads met, with a game cock under his arm, for a given time, crying as he went along, "Who'll buy my cock? Who'll buy my cock?" This he did in front of the Bull's Head. If anyone had come along and bought the cock that person would have been taken for the devil in disguise, and having bought the cock he would also have bought the soul of Jack Wright. Such was the belief at this time.

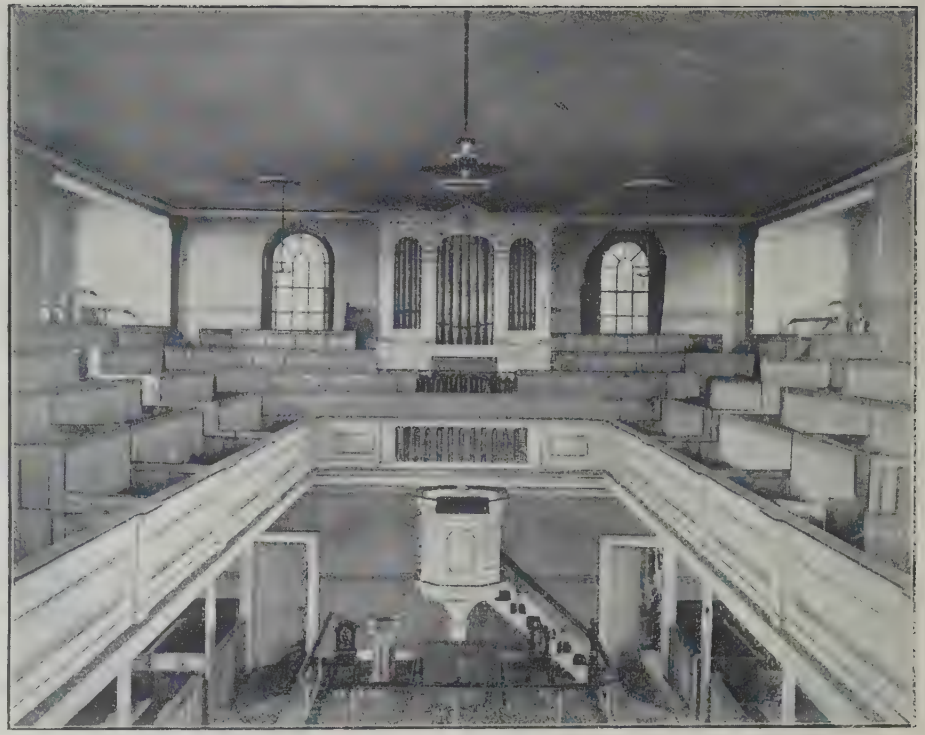
A farm labourer's wife was greatly troubled with toothache. She was always groaning and complaining about it, when her unsympathetic husband said; "Tooth warch wor na auve as bad as she made eawt." (He had never had it himself.) A short time after he was working on the Moss. A bitter cold east wind was blowing, which gave him a raging toothache. Returning home from his work, he came indoors with his hand to his jaw. "What's up now?" his wife asked. "Why, I'm struck wi deoth it' meawth!" "Nay," she said. "Tha's getten tooth warch. Tha knows naa whether it's auve as bad as I made eawt." "It's noan tooth warch, ah tell thi. Am struck wi deoth it' meawth!" He went to old Tinsley's, who lived at the end of Jane Lane, and

worked on the road. Old Tinsley professed to charm away such things as toothache. As a lad, I was playing in the house with some of his grandchildren when this labourer came in. The man made a motion to old Tinsley to drive us all out. But the old man said " They'll make no difference." So he commenced to cure the labourer's toothache by making a short prayer, in which the name of St. Peter came very frequently. Then he wrote something on a piece of paper, and told him to wear this paper, stitched to his under-garment, next to his skin and opposite his heart, and quite solemnly old Tinsley said, " Now, if you do this, and believe it, you'll never have toothache again ! "

In old Swinton *nearly everybody was known by a nickname.* Very few of their neighbours would know, in some cases, their real name, and sometimes not even their own children knew what it was. Many instances of this kind of thing could be given. I will be content with three.

When William Collier was collecting for Dr. Dorning, he had a debt to collect from a man named Peter Boardman, in Clifton. He had spent some hours in seeking this man. When he was passing the very door where the man lived, a young woman was just coming out at the time. " Can you tell me where Mr. Peter Boardman lives ? " Mr. Collier asked. " No, I can't ; but I will ask my mam." Her mother came to the door, and the girl said : " Mam, he wants to know where Mr. Peter Boardman lives." " Why, tha foo, it's thi fayther ! " the mother replied. Now, if he had asked for " Peter Dickey Billy Pee " there would have been no difficulty whatsoever in finding him.

When gas was first brought to Swinton a Gas Inspector



THE OLD WESLEYAN CHAPEL (INTERIOR). (SEE PAGE 21.)

came to see George Greenhalgh to inspect the fittings in his house. He searched for George Greenhalgh nearly all day with no success, when someone told him to call and ask me if I knew who the man was? I said "If you will go near the White Lion and ask any child you meet where "Wank" lives, they will show you.

An old friend and I were thinking one day how many nicknames we could remember of people living between "Red Cat" and the "Bull's Head." We counted over two hundred!

When Dr. Dorning was passing lads for half time at the mill, he asked one boy what his father's name was? "John Cork," the boy said. "And what's your mother's name?" "Mary Ann Roberts," the boy replied. "And what is your name?" the doctor asked. "Sam Sailor," said the lad! The doctor exclaimed; "Whoever can make that out? Go home and ask your name!"

Old Swinton had its "*Wakes*," which was always held on the first Sunday after the 23rd of July, and was continued for three days. It was spent in bull-baiting, bear-baiting, cock-fighting, and duck-swimming, with plenty of drinking and such like pleasures. The bull for the "baiting" was generally provided by a Salford butcher named Cawson, who kept such beasts for the purpose. It would be gaily decorated with ribbons and the like. The places of baiting were the Bull's Head and White Lion alternately. When at the Bull's Head, it was behind the Vicarage, near about the playground of the new schools. The place, in those days, was called "Seven Pits." Sometimes the "baiting" took place in a field behind the Bull's Head Inn. At the White Lion, the spot was the "Valley," or "the back o' Jonathan's," and the stone with the iron ring to which

the bull was secured was still there two or three years ago. On one or two occasions the bull was " baited " in White's Sand Hole, where the Social Club Bowling-green is now. The prize for the best dog was generally a good dog collar.

When the bull had been secured, being accustomed to the sport, it would begin to paw a hole in the ground, in which to hide its nose, and thus protect itself from the dogs. The " Bellert " would then commence the proceedings by crying in a loud voice : " One dog, one bull ; three runs and a wind ! " Then the dog would be set at the bull, which would try to pitch the dog with its horns, sometimes sending it many yards into the air and killing it. At other times the dog would get his three runs at the bull. Then there would be a rest, or, as the " Bellert " called it, " a wind ". Then the process would be gone through again with another dog. But the dog that could pin the bull won the collar. " Pinning the bull " was getting hold of its nose. At times the bull's fury would be so great that he would break loose, when there would be a great scamper of the crowd to some place of safety.

Then, by way of change, there would be a cock-fight, or a " duck-swim." A duck would be turned on to a pond ; then a dog would be sent into the water to catch the duck. When the dog got near, the duck would dive and come up at another place. This would go on until the dog was either exhausted or drowned, when a second dog would be sent after the duck. This sport generally ended in the drowning of the dogs, the duck being very seldom caught.

The last time there was a " Bull-Bait " in Swinton was in 1838, when there was some jealousy or misunderstanding between the " White Lion " and the " Bull's

Head " as to where the sport should be held, and neither would give way, so a " Bull Bait " was held at both places. Since that time Swinton Wakes began to decline, and in a very few years it ceased to be. Shortly after this an Act of Parliament was passed against cruelty to animals, and these barbarous sports became illegal ; and none too soon, for the brutalising effect of such things upon the people must have been very great. Before this Act of Parliament, pot carts and greengrocer's carts were often drawn by dogs in Swinton. About three dogs would be yoked into a cartful of goods, and when the cart was empty often the man and his wife (who would be with him) would jump into the cart and be driven home by the dogs. These dogs were large and wore muzzles, and in some instances could travel almost as fast as a horse.

Some time after the Wakes had been abandoned, " Old Moke," with two or three " pals," tried to revive it. They went up and down the village the Monday night after the 23rd, with lighted candles, as though they were looking for something, and when asked what they had lost, they said : " Nothing ; we were only looking if we could find th' Wakes ! " There was a pony race or two got up, and a few stalls, and old Hannah Wright offered a gingerbread-hat to be run for by two women. I forget who won it ; but there has been nothing since, and there are very few persons now living who could tell when it was Swinton Wakes Sunday.

With the advent of the railway, the people began to take their pleasures in a different way. Cheap trips were organised to various seaside resorts. These were well patronised, and took the place of the old Wakes.

The first cheap railway excursion from Swinton was to Blackpool, all the mills joining at it. The fare was

one shilling, and one penny for the band—for they took their own music with them, and carried their food in baskets, &c. The people were greatly afraid they would not be up in time to catch the train at Clifton Junction, so it was agreed that Samuel Royle, who was an old drummer, should, along with "Old Fifeing-Adam," go through the village at three o'clock in the morning, playing the fife and a kettle-drum to wake them up. This was done, and they were in time for the train, and had a really enjoyable day down by the sea. Very few of them had ever seen the sea before.

The following year the trip was to Fleetwood, and they went from "Black Harry Bridge" Station, in Swinton Park. But there was not the same commotion as on the previous occasion, it having become an ordinary thing with them. Before the days of the railway, anyone going to the seaside must travel by the coach or "Swift-Packet." I have often gone to see my aunt and mother off to Southport. They boarded the "Packet" at Worsley Bridge. Two or three horses would be yoked to the boat, and always a postillion on the back of the first horse, with a bugle, giving the call when another boat was in the way, or on the arrival at any village or station, where they would change horses. At Scarisbrick they went from the canal to omnibuses. Southport was a very different place then from what it is to-day. "Fashionable Southport" was in those days but a small village, with a few fishermen's cottages.

The year 1863 was a very sad year for Swinton, owing to the *American Civil War*. The Southern Ports of America were blockaded, so that no cotton could leave there without the great risk of running the blockade, and perhaps losing both the cotton and the ships. So

there was no cotton to be had for the mills, which had to stop. The only mill in Swinton that ran, almost all the time of the cotton panic, was Mr. Stuttard's "Albert Mill," and it was run principally on Indian cotton, called "Surat." All the other mills were stopped.

This caused a good deal of poverty and distress among the people. Soup kitchens were started, which kept body and soul together. The Unitarian School was opened for the people, and a teacher provided. This enabled many of them to improve their education, and later on to become mill managers.

A good deal of cast-off clothing was sent from different parts of the country and was distributed at the various places of worship. Everybody did their best to help everybody else to tide over this terrible time—the gentry taking a very active part in the movement for relief. Mr. Noah Robinson [who about this period commenced a career of usefulness in Swinton which did not cease until a short time before his death. His services on behalf of the public being recognised in December, 1882, by the presentation to him of his portrait in oils and an illuminated address, and again in 1901 by the erection of the stone pillar in Swinton Public Gardens, upon which is inscribed: "Erected to commemorate the services rendered to the district by Noah Robinson, who for more than 36 years filled the post of Guardian of the poor, and also discharged many other public duties, in a manner which has won for him the gratitude and esteem of his friends and neighbours"]. Mr. Robinson and others saw to the soup kitchen—that the soup, though plain, was good and nourishing, and that it was given to those who really needed it.

To have seen the people when the first load of cotton came to the village after the war was never to forget it.

The people ran out of their houses to see it pass, with tears of joy streaming down their smiling faces. The trade then rapidly improved, and was very good for some years. Everybody had more work than they could do. The markets being depleted, there was a great demand for cotton goods, and the people had a chance of recovering themselves.

In 1871 *the Franco-German War* broke out, and this made trade in this country exceedingly busy ; and goods that were manufactured went up in price by leaps and bounds. Coals also advanced to enormous prices—three or four times in a fortnight they rose 2s. 6d. a ton. Colliers' wages went up proportionately, and some of them were very extravagant, and would not work more than half their time ; others worked hard and saved a good deal of money. Some of the reckless ones spent their money riding about in cabs, visiting first-class hotels, and ordering anything they heard others order ; but they did not always understand what it was they had ordered. A party of colliers went into the Queen's Hotel, Manchester, and hearing a gentleman order a bottle of champagne, they ordered the same, but were served with " Yorkshire Relish " in champagne bottles, or some other compound, which they could not drink.

I was one day in Margaret Royle's little shop, near the " Bull's Head," when two colliers came in, and one asked for a pound of tea, which she weighed and put into a piece of newspaper and screwed it up, so that he could put it into his coat pocket. When the other man saw it screwed up, he snatched it out of his hand and flung it as far as he could into the street, saying, " Come with me, and I'll take you to a shop where you will get it properly wrapped up."

BRIDGET HOLT'S WELLS. (FROM A PAINTING BY THE AUTHOR.) (SEE PAGE 15.)

About this time John Evans and myself were walking out one Sunday morning along the Canal bank in Clifton, and from " Charles Leigh's Bridge " to the Aqueduct there were more than a hundred groups of men " tossing " with sovereigns. There was not a silver or copper piece to be seen amongst them, all sovereigns and half-sovereigns on the ground, and each group had a good sum of money at stake. As we were passing I said, " John, you will never see a sight like that again ! "

In the early part of the nineteenth century Swinton was *a village of hand-loom weavers.* Passing through, you would have heard the merry rattle of the looms at work in almost every house. Two, three, and four looms, and sometimes more, would be fixed in the bedrooms, and a great many in cellars. In the loom shop there was always an earth floor, or, as they called it, a " clay floor." Some of the dwelling rooms where the weavers lived had earth floors, not even flags or bricks. But with constant use they became almost as hard as bricks and as black as coal. They would mop and wash them, just as a flag floor.

When work was brisk, amid the rattle of the machinery, you would have heard the cheerful whistle of the weavers, or the singing of a favourite hymn or song. The old women, who generally wound the bobbins—or " pins," as they were called—were as happy as the men. They wove both silk and cotton goods, and when they were finished, these goods were carried in a " piece-poke " or " wallet " (a kind of large bag, in which they put the cloth from one loom at one end and the cloth from the other loom at the other end, sometimes with yells and reeds) across their shoulder, and in this way some went as far as Radcliffe, or, as they called it, " over the water." Others would go to Giles Gee's, at Kearsley, some to

Manchester, and some to Moor Lane, Swinton, to Elkanah Armitage's. It was here the great Pendleton manufacturer began business in a room over a stable behind the White Lion. After that, he removed to the Old Mill in Moor Lane, where he gave out work to the weavers. As the weavers went on these journeys they often called at the public-houses on the way, and sometimes spent all the money they had drawn for their work. One weaver, who had done this several times, made a resolution that he would do it no more. So in coming home, after he had received his wages and got his warp and weft across his shoulder in his "piece-poke," he came trudging along until he got to within fifty or sixty yards of the "Witches' Nest" public-house. Then he ran for his life until he was about the same distance on the other side, where he paused and said: "Good resolution! good resolution! Tha desarves a pint for that." He turned back just for a pint; but, as usual, stayed until he hadn't "a bawbee" left.

Another old weaver I knew, who liked his beer and often got drunk before he returned on these journeys, was coming home with his warp and weft across his shoulder, when he stopped to rest near the Aqueduct, at Clifton, and fell asleep. Waking up, he forgot his load, and went home without it. When his wife saw him she said, "Where's thi warp and weft?" He was so muddled with drink it was quite a time before he could call to mind where he had laid it. She sent two of her girls to look for it, and there they found it where he had slept, near the bridge, and brought it home.

On another occasion an old woman, who had gone with her "piece-poke," with the work of some of her family to Radcliffe, on returning was met by Mr. Phillips, of Phillip's Park, on horse back. Stopping until the

old woman came up to him, he said to her, "Can you tell me who lives at yonder house," pointing to his own residence. She replied, "Aw conna tell yo what his name is, but they caw him Owd Howler Yed." "Well," says he, "throw your warp and weft across the horse's back, and I'll go as far as the Aqueduct; it will be a lift for you." When they got there she took the warp and weft from the back of the horse, threw them across her shoulders and was about to start for home, when he said, "Here, there's a half-crown for you, and when you get back tell them Owd Howler Yead gave it to you." This story illustrates that even the gentry were not free from nicknames in those days.

Some of the men who gave out the work to weavers were very harsh and severe with them. They would inflict a fine for the least defect in the cloth. Much depended on the humour they were in when they examined the piece. Sometimes they were sent home to re-pick the cloth when there was practically no fault with it. I well remember a weaver who was sent back with his piece to re-pick. He knew the cloth was perfect, and didn't require anything. So he took it into the nearest public house, where he sat drinking for a couple of hours, never taking the cloth out of the "piece-poke." Then he returned with it. "Ah," said the man, "this is something like. If thaad a picked it like this afore, it would a saved thee a good deal o' trouble." Such things often occurred.

Giles Gee, who was a "putter-out" at Kearsley, was very tyrannical. He would cheat the poor weaver in every way he could. In measuring the cloth he would slip more than a yard. After measuring, say, about twenty-three yards he would find some fault. This would often lead to words between him and the

weaver. Then he would begin measuring again, and instead of beginning at twenty-three he would slip another two yards and begin with twenty-one. They always said his yard stick, with which he measured, was thirty-eight inches long. Weavers were paid a penny and upwards a yard for weaving. If a weaver had by any means the slightest hole in the cloth—and often such little faults would be caused by a thick or fluffy thread in the warp or weft—for all such small defects "Owd Giles" would fine the weaver one shilling a hole. On one occasion there happened to be two such holes in the cloth, about a yard apart, so he was fining the weaver two shillings. "Nay," said the old weaver, "that's too bad, Mr. Gee." "Owd Giles" replied; "It doesn't matter, it's a shilling a hole, big or little!" With that the weaver took out his knife and ripped the two little holes into one large one. "There!" said he, "I've spoiled your cloth, but I've saved a shilling."

In 1851, "Owd Giles" came to see Her Majesty Queen Victoria on her visit to Worsley, and called on Richard Rawlinson, who had been one of his principal men when he started business. At this time the poor old fellow, through the kick of a horse, had lost one of his legs. Richard Rawlinson asked him how he was since losing his leg? "Oh," he said, "it's very painful, but aw think it's been sent as a punishment for the way aw treated them poor weavers." This he said in the presence of Mr. Richard Rawlinson and his son Samuel Rawlinson.

On one occasion the weavers struck for more pay; but the "putters-out" would not listen to the demand. There was to be a great meeting in Bolton. The weavers marched in procession. On their way they called on old Giles Gee, and compelled him to come along with

them ; in fact, to head them up, with his notorious yard stick as high in the air as he could hold it. If he happened to lower it ever so little they would give him a reminder on the elbow with a stick.

When steam looms were introduced "Owd Giles" used to say to the hand-loom weavers ; " Be hard, lads, and we'll break down these steam looms yet ! " The hand looms could not compete with the steam looms, and many of the weavers were very poor. The wages they could earn were hardly enough to keep them alive with the plainest of food. Most of them had porridge three times a day—for breakfast, dinner, and tea. In one house that I knew the porridge was poured into a big dish and placed in the centre of the table. At a given sign they were allowed to help themselves. The sign was the rapping of the table with a spoon by the father, when the children went for the porridge like wild animals, each trying to get as much as possible. On one occasion, one of the weavers didn't hear the spoon rapping. His mother went to call him. He said : " Has fayther rapped ? " " Aye," she replied. " Then it's no use my going, for ther'll be nowt left ! "

Sometimes they ate the porridge with buttermilk ; at other times with treacle or treacle and water. Walking through the village any morning, the porridge pan might have been seen outside almost every house. The bread, when they ate any, was generally " jannock," or barley bread, and oat cake ; white bread was a great luxury, and very scarce ; some poor people had hardly ever tasted it. Much depended in those days on the harvest, foreign wheat not being imported as it is to-day. If the harvest had been poor the only bread they could get was made from barley flour, which, when kneaded and ready for baking, looked very dark, and when it was placed

into the oven it took two or three people to keep it in, for it ran out in a thick paste. When baked it was as solid as a swede turnip. If you broke it into bits and put it into milk, it would sink to the bottom like lead.

During one of these "Barley times," as they were called, a lad, whose name was George Holland, had toothache. His father took him to the chemist to have it out. The lad refused. Both the chemist and his father did their utmost to persuade the boy, but without avail, when the chemist said, "Look here, mi lad, if thaal have it eawt, I'll give thee a white cake." The boy immediately consented, saying, "Awl have every tooth i' mi yed tan eawt for a white cake a-piece!"

The weavers had to use flour for sizing their warps, and the flour must be of good quality. These bad harvests made it very hard for the weavers; the price of flour would get so high as to almost be prohibitive—often it would be as much as sixpence a pound—six shillings a dozen.

The tax on all foreign wheat coming into this country was so high, it sometimes got as much as ten shillings a load. It varied according to the price of wheat here—the higher the price of English wheat the lower the duty on foreign wheat, the duty being paid on a graduated scale. The duty on barley, peas, oats, and oatmeal, and other cereals was considerably less than on wheat, and thus brought these foods more within the reach of the poor.

On account of these and other things, the weavers were greatly dissatisfied with the Government of the country, and many of them professed to be politicians, in their way—often discussing among themselves their grievances. Great meetings would be held from time to time, and extreme and fiery speeches would be

MR. NOAH ROBINSON.

(SEE PAGE 33)

delivered. The people generally were very ignorant. Few could either read or write. Some had never been to school, except Sunday School. In the Sunday Schools of those days they taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. But little progress could be made by only two hours a week lessons, and the brains of the children were dull for the want of good feeding. At seven years of age many of them commenced work.

Newspapers were very dear, as much as sixpence and eightpence a copy. Sometimes they would club together and buy a paper, and under the finger-post, at the corner of Partington Lane, opposite the Parish Church, they would group together, and one would read aloud the news of the day, after which it would be discussed. In this way they kept posted up, and gathered what little knowledge they possessed of politics and other matters. They readily joined any Government or Party that advocated Reform.

These men who met at the finger-post were not very well behaved. They had a vile habit of calling out to passers-by—rich or poor, males or females—insulting remarks. I have known women go a long way round rather than encounter these rough fellows and their vulgar speeches.

As a result of the war with France and the bad harvests in the early part of last century, there was great distress, and the people were crying out for reforms. There was little or no work for the weavers, and many were starving, so the people began rioting, plundering, and mobbing. They would go to the farmhouses and demand to know the prices of milk, potatoes, and other produce, and if they were considered too dear for the people to purchase they would ransack the place

and take what they wanted. It was the same with the shops. They would ask the prices of flour, bread, oat-cakes, jannock, potatoes, &c., and these always being too high a price would be an excuse for plundering. On one of these mobbing occasions about the year 1816, led by a man named Cross, from Dale's Brow, and another man named Lomas, or "Owd Torney," as he was called, who lived in the "Barracks" at Swinton, the people went to different farmhouses, shops, and gentlemen's residences and demanded food. When they arrived at the flour mill at Worsley, which stood at the bottom of Mill Brow, they entered, and with scoops and shovels threw the flour into the women's aprons. Scores of women could be seen carrying the flour away. For these proceedings Cross was arrested and sentenced to seven years penal servitude. "Owd Torney" went and hid himself on the riverside in Clifton, where food was carried to him by some of the Swinton people until the affair had quietened down.

The next heard of "Owd Torney," he was the leader of a detachment of "Blanketeers" from Swinton. There were many of these bands from different places, who were to join and lay their grievances before George, the Prince Regent, in person. They set out from Swinton on the 24th March, 1817, reaching Macclesfield the same evening. They returned the next day, having heard that the military and the Lancashire and Cheshire Yeomanry had dispersed and arrested a great many of the leaders of certain detachments which had met in Peter's Field, Manchester (the spot where the Free Trade Hall now stands). The soldiers had also followed other detachments which had started off before the time of the meeting and gone by different routes, and, overtaking them, dispersed and arrested their leaders.

In 1819 the *Radical agitation* had reached its climax, with Henry Hunt as its champion. Amongst the precautionary measures deemed neccessary for the preservation of the peace and the suppression of seditious meetings was the suspension of the "Habeas Corpus Act." We had also the "Watch and Ward," composed of the chief inhabitants of the district, who if they saw two or three persons standing together had power to disperse or arrest them. All lights had to be out by nine o'clock, so no private meetings could be held in any of the houses. A meeting called by the Reformers was prohibited. But these things did not deter them from attending the great meeting at Peter's Field, Manchester, on the 16th August.

As Henry Hunt was on his way to Manchester the day before, passing through Pendlebury in his carriage and pair, the horses were taken out of the carriage, and both men and women drew the carriage with its occupants at a great speed along the road to Manchester. Such was the enthusiasm of these Reformers, brought about by the Government, who, in their high-handedness, would not listen to the complaints of starving people.

Next day eighty thousand marched in procession from all parts of the country, going peacefully to lay their grievances before the Authorities. But before the meeting had commenced it was declared illegal. Though the people were determined, the Authorities sent the Yeomanry and dispersed them. It is said the soldiers were drunk. They rode right among the crowd, slashing away with their swords right and left. Many were killed and a greater number wounded. One woman from Swinton had her breast cut off. This is known as the "*Peterloo Massacre*," occurring, as it did, only a short time after the slaughter of Waterloo. It

was said, that some of those who gave the order to the Yeomanry to disperse the people lived in Swinton Park and the neighbourhood.

Another curious thing about those days was the practice of certain men called "*Resurrectionists*," or "*Body Snatchers*." These strange people would ascertain the times and places of certain funerals, then go in the dead of night, open the grave and remove the body from its coffin, and sell it for dissecting purposes. To prevent these shocking practices the following method of filling in the graves was adopted :—A layer of earth, a layer of straw, &c. ; sometimes other materials were used to make unearthing of the coffin difficult. But this proving ineffective, clubs of "Watchers" were formed—one such club was held at the "Bull's Head." The way these clubs were carried on was as follows :—The members would meet in the tap room of the public house, and when the landlord wished to retire for the night he would come and ask how much beer they wanted. After supplying them, he would lock the door and make for bed. The watchers left the tap room through the window, and every hour or so would walk round the churchyard to see that all was well. This they did for three nights after the interment, believing that after that time decomposition would render the bodies unfit for dissection. These watchers received sixpence a night for their work, with plenty of food and drink. If the dead belonged to a rich family, of course the remuneration would be higher.

Previous to the starting of these clubs, a corpse was stolen from Swinton Churchyard. It was the body of a woman named Benyon. She was found the following morning in the Dark Lane. There was a dingle just

beyond, where Sir Lees Knowles' house now stands, it was in this dingle where the body was discovered in a "piece poke" and covered with leaves. It was brought back to the churchyard and re-interred. Another body was "snatched" from Eccles Churchyard. The woman, when alive, lived in the "Slack," Pendlebury. Her name was Seddon. Now, when Mrs. Seddon was on her deathbed she requested to be buried in "th' Chapel i'th Gardens," remarking that if they did not bury her there she would come back the same night she was buried. On this very night her body was stolen from the grave in Eccles Churchyard and hidden in the wood near "Gilda Brook." The corpse was found the following morning. She was re-interred according to her wish, this second time in "Chapel i'th Gardens" graveyard. The stone over her grave gives particulars of the case.

Another body was stolen from Monton Green Chapelyard. This was that of a man named George Grimshaw. The last body that was watched over in Swinton was in the year 1837.

About the year 1832 there was a terrible murder committed at a farmhouse in Jane Lane (now called Swinton Hall Road). A milk boy named Jack Parkinson was driving his cart from the farm to Manchester, when some boys began to call him nicknames. He ran after the boys and pummelled them rather vigorously. One of the boys that he thrashed was the son of a wheelwright named Wych, who lived at Eccles. The boy's father and brother were working at the time at Anthony Brownhill's farm in Swinton Park. When young Wych got to Brownhill's he told his father what had happened. The father and brothers determined to have their revenge. The same night they all came up to the White Lion,

where they got drink, with the intention of "having it out" with Parkinson; but, not seeing him, they went to White's farm and asked for Parkinson. They met him as he was coming out of the house, and one of the Wychs stabbed him in the neck with a gouge, severing the jugular vein. He ran up the orchard and fell into a currant bush, where Henry Smith found his body the next morning. The Coroner's inquest brought in a verdict of "wilful murder" against the two elder Wychs. They were tried at Lancaster Castle, and sentenced to penal servitude for life. Neither would confess as to who did the deed.

The Chartist agitation I remember very well. The leaders wanted special reform. Six members of Parliament and six working men were told off to prepare a Bill to be brought before Parliament, embodying the desires of the people. This was called "The People's Charter." Its six provisions were as follows:—

1st—That all men of the age of 21 years, untainted with crime and of sound mind, all naturalised foreigners who had resided in the United Kingdom for two years, were to have a vote.

2nd—Equal electoral rights.

3rd—Vote by ballot.

4th—Annual Parliaments.

5th—No property qualification for members of Parliament.

6th—Payment of members for their services.

These were the six points of the Charter, and were received by the people with great enthusiasm. Great meetings were held, attended sometimes by scores of thousands. Fiery orators fanned the excitement into

INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS ENTRANCE.

(SEE PAGE 8.)

a mad blaze. Physical force was soon suggested as the only means by which justice could be got for the people. The people, already maddened by poverty and hunger, were ready for anything, and in the autumn of 1838 torchlight meetings were held all over the country. The dangers of these meetings were obvious. They were put down, some of the leaders being arrested amidst tremendous excitement. To bring the Government into submission, the leaders of the people recommended everybody who had any money in banks to take it out, to abstain from eating and drinking anything upon which duty had to be paid, so as to cripple the Government. All public meetings were forbidden. Then we had the "Watch and Ward," composed of the middle and upper classes, sworn to be good men and true, with the power of a constable, who if they saw two or three persons standing together could disperse or arrest them.

In 1839 a petition was presented to the House of Commons, signed by 1,280,000 persons, in favour of the "Charter." The House of Commons refused to name a day for its consideration. The leaders of the people retaliated by advising the people to cease work. Fortunately, this advice was not followed; but the disturbance in the public mind increased, and in 1842 riots broke out again.

They were mobbing and rioting in a great many places in Swinton. The mob marched six or eight deep through the Barracks. They meant to draw the plugs of the boilers of the "New Engine" and "Red Cat" Coal Pits, and other works. They were determined the people should not work, by which means they would impoverish the country and bring the Government to its knees, when a detachment of horse soldiers, dashing down Burying Lane with drawn swords, followed these

adicals ; some of them threw off their jackets and caps, and flung them into the first house they came to ; then, popping their pipes into their mouths stood as if smoking and living a most peaceful and contented life. One man ran into old Samuel Benyon's and upstairs, creeping underneath the bed ; but one of the soldiers followed him and made him a prisoner.

Others ran into the fields, threw off their coats and began working. Others made for the Moss, where they knew the soldiers could not follow ; but some of the soldiers did attempt it, until their horses sank up to the flank in the bog. Being unable to extricate their horses, they had to get some of these runaways to help them, promising to let them go if they would, which they did ; but they took many of them prisoners, and some were severely dealt with.

About this time a man named Wood, who lived in Patricroft, a very strong chartist, was leading a number of rioters, who did a great deal of damage at Astley. He was searched for all over the land, but he was not to be found, for he was hiding at Old Reuben Cheetham's, up Long Fold, Swinton, where he remained until things quietened down.

Previous to the year 1835 the *relief of the poor* was more of a charitable affair than a fixed law. But in 1835 a law was passed that every householder should pay a rate for the relief of the poor. A good many were so poor themselves they couldn't afford to pay the poor rate, or, as they called it, "Poor Ley," which caused a great deal of rebellious work ; and when Mr. Trenbath came to collect the rate in the "Barracks," at Swinton, they stoned him ; women took their shovels and threw fire out of the grate at him. At last three of

the men got him into "Owd Stain's." These men made him go down on his knees and solemnly promise that he would never come again to collect the "Poor Ley." "Owd Sowl" stood over him with the tongs, "Owd Stain" with the poker, threatening to kill him unless he promised These men were afterwards arrested for assault. "Owd Sowl" (whose real name was Greenhalgh) was sent to prison for 18 months, and "Stain" (whose real name was Atkinson) for twelve months. Jack Wright, who begged of the other two not to hurt him, got discharged.

About this time, Orlando Dawson, who resided in Wardley Lane, was weaving when "Owd Trenbath" called for the poor rate. "Here is a paper for thi!" the Collector said. "Come in," said Orlando, "and sit thi daan!" Mr. Trenbath came in. Orlando immediately locked the door, and putting the "deeting-iron" into the fire, said: "Na then, aal mak thi eat that afore tha goes eawt o' here!" But, Orlando having occasion to go into the loom shop, the Collector escaped through the window. For this "Owd Orlando" was sent to goal for twelve calendar months.

One day old David Atkin, the constable, and Trenbath were out together serving summonses and collecting poor rates. They were going up the gardens to one of the houses, just beyond where the small park or recreation ground is now in Chorley Road, when Richard Rawlinson, who lived in the first house, saw them "coming up t' fowt." He picked up a large stone, and with all his might threw it at them. It just missed the constable's head—had the aim been truer it would have killed him. After Rawlinson had thrown the stone he stooped very low, and was screened by the garden hedge; thus he crept into the house without being discovered. But about forty years afterwards, a few weeks before

he died, an old woman who lived opposite met him, and putting her hand on his shoulder she said : " Dick, if tha'd a kilt owd David, aw should a had to a gone as a witness against thee." Not till that moment did he know he had been seen. She saw the occurrence from her bedroom window.

The agitation for the *Repeal of the Corn Laws* was an exciting time in Swinton. Meetings were held all over the country, and Swinton shared in them. The tax on foreign corn had been altered from time to time, but with no satisfactory result, and the " Anti-Corn Law League " was vigorously prosecuting its work. Monster meetings were held, and petitions presented to the Queen praying for the abolition of the tax on corn. Sir Robert Peel, who at one time had been a great supporter of the tax, changed his views and became an enthusiastic Free Trader. In 1846 he brought into Parliament his famous Bill for the total repeal of the Corn Laws, which, after a tremendous struggle in both Houses of Parliament, was passed and became law. A mammoth petition was signed by millions of people and sent to the House of Commons, praying that the Bill might pass. The following is the heading of the petition :—

> " It is the unanimous conviction of your petitioners that the corn tax alone is a greater evil than all others put together ; wicked in its principles, partial in its operation, it fills the pockets of the landowner and foreigner, while it impoverishes and famishes the producers of the nation's wealth. It has greatly lessened the demand for British manufacture abroad, and has so exceedingly reduced the wages of your petitioners, and raised the price of food, that, though they toil

unremittingly for fifteen or sixteen hours a day, they are unable to obtain even a sufficiency of the common necessaries of life. It has subjected your petitioners, together with millions of Her Majesty's dutiful subjects, to a state of misery that is unparalleled in any nation in the world. Pent up in gloomy and unwholesome cellars, or immured in suffocating factory daily, much longer than is rightfully necessary to earn a comfortable livelihood, not half fed, and worse clothed, your petitioners hardly resemble human beings, and are fast hastening to the grave, together with hundreds of thousands of their unhappy fellow-countrymen, victims of this detestable corn tax, have been untimely consigned. Your petitioners therefore pray your Honourable House not to counteract the Will of Omnipotence, and goad a generous people to madness by the continuance of this system of starvation; but, as religion is part and parcel of the law of the land, to obey its Heavenly precepts, 'to do unto others as ye would they should do unto you,' to quash every enactment that may be contrary to its mild, equitable, and conciliating spirit, and in fine to reinstate your Honourable House in the favour of the nation by repealing, at once, that obnoxious and infamous corn tax; and your petitioners will ever pray ———."

The passing of this law filled the land with gladness and thanksgiving. I well remember "Owd Moke" (Moses Eckersley) collecting all the children together and making them sit on the curb stones while he served them with cheese and bread and beer from a waggon. The children had to bring their own drinking mugs, which were filled as often as required from a huge barrel.

What the older people got I do not remember; but I expect they would get the same, only more of it.

At times, before the repeal of the Corn Laws, when the harvests were poor and the people almost in a state of famine, days of fasting and prayer would be observed. All works would be closed, churches and chapels open to implore the Almighty to send better harvests.

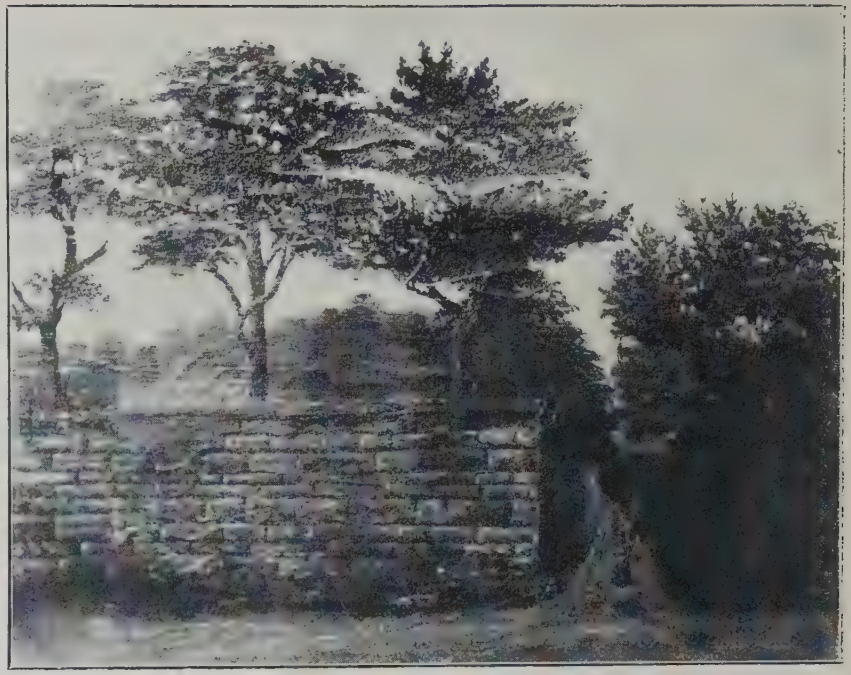
These days were called by Royal Proclamation. The proclamation would run as follows :—

> " Proclamation, that such and such a day would be set apart for prayer and fasting throughout the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and our town Berwick-on-Tweed. God save the Queen ! "

These days the people called " Fast days," and if my memory serves me rightly, there has never been a " Fast day " since the Corn Laws were repealed.

Sir Robert Peel brought in a Bill for *the introduction of police* all over the country. When it passed, for a while it caused a good deal of friction and dissatisfaction, for people had not the same chance of doing mischief and escaping punishment as they had before. They imagined their liberty was gone, for now either their conduct had to improve or to jail they would have to go.

Swinton's first policeman was William Cornforth, or " Big William," as the people called him. He lived in one of the three houses that stood at the corner of Swinton Churchyard. These houses were occupied by old Jacky Ormrod, David Barlow, and " Big William." The " Lock-up " was in " Big William's " house, and in a garret over the houses there lived " Owd Clog Sal," one of the " Morris dancers " of Swinton.



STONE ACRE. (FROM A PAINTING BY THE AUTHOR.) (SEE PAGE 26.)

The first year of the police, when the 5th of November came round, the hand-loom weavers of Swinton had collected sufficient money to purchase about two tons of coal, the price of which was much less than half what it is to-day. The coal was brought from Bury Lane Pit, near where Knowles' Mill now stands, and tipped in Jane Lane, near where Brackley Street is now. Here "Knocus," "Long Ned," "Owd Gromp," "Jack Torney," and others made the fire, and when they had got it nicely going the police came upon them with shovels and rakes to put it out. To finish it off they carried water from the wells and threw it on the fire; but while they fetched the water the weavers drew the fire together and tried to keep it burning. This went on for a couple of hours or so. Then stones began to be thrown at the police. Things looked serious, when one of the weavers went to Elias Chadwick's, at Swinton Hall, who was a magistrate, and laid the case before him. He at once came and ordered the police away, saying he would not have the old customs interfered with. So it ended peacefully, and a rare old time we had, having for once mastered the police.

In 1851 *Queen Victoria and Prince Albert paid a visit* to Worsley. On October 10th they arrived at Patricroft Station; from thence they came to Worsley by Royal barge on the Canal. On the following day the Queen, along with Prince Albert and the Duke of Wellington and other noblemen, came up Moor Lane on her way to Peel Park, Salford. The scholars from the various schools were grouped in Moor Lane, and as she passed they sang the National Anthem. There were stands erected, but very few took advantage of them, so that, financially, they were a huge failure. A very fine arch, beautifully decorated, was set up a little lower down

than White's farm, in Moor Lane. Special constables were appointed to keep the crowds in order. They stood along the route about every hundred yards. Each constable had his baton erect, and the moment the Royal Party got in the carriages at Worsley Hall the first brought down his baton to his side, the next did likewise, like a row of bricks falling. In this way the news spread that Her Majesty was on her journey. As a Guard of Honour she had a large number of Yeomanry Cavalry. These accompanied her as far as Cross Lane, Salford. The authorities would not permit them in the borough for fear of disturbance, as " Peterloo " was still fresh in the minds of the people. Upwards of 70,000 school children welcomed the Royal Party in Peel Park.

About the year 1854 a great deal of speculation was rife regarding the Monarch of France, *Napoleon II., invading England,* and two Liverpool gentlemen wrote him asking if the report were true. The ridiculous idea of asking a Monarch to divulge his secret brought these two gentlemen very prominently into the next Christmas pantomimes. But the report stirred the people, and *a Volunteer movement* was set on foot. The Swinton Volunteers were " sworn in " at the Industrial Schools, commonly called the " Bastile," James Aspinal Turner, M.P., and other gentlemen taking a prominent part in it. There had, however, been Volunteers in Swinton before this, under the Duke of Wellington, for there is to-day at Miss Lansdale's house a flag or colour, made and embroidered by the ladies of Swinton, and presented by them to these Volunteers stationed at Swinton.

After this first Volunteer movement broke up, this flag was presented to the Parish Church, and it hung

in the Church for a long time, until very dilapidated. It was then taken to Mr. Lansdale's, who kept the Bull's Head, for safe custody, and only on special occasions was it brought into the Church. After the service it would be returned to the Bull's Head. This was done so long as it held together; but it became so tender with age that it was placed in a box, where it has remained to this day. It was always said that Swinton supplied more men for the Army than any other town or village of its size in the United Kingdom.

After *the Battle of Waterloo* had been won and peace declared, there were great rejoicings in Swinton, and to commemorate the event an ox was roasted on the ground where Mr. Yates' chemist's shop now stands, at the corner of Station Road. When roasted, it was carried across the street to the corner of Partington Lane, to the place where the stocks stood, and there cut up and divided amongst the people, and "Owd Shepley" told me "it was gradely good," for he said "I had not tasted either beef or mutton for two years, and they gave me a good slice, and I got part of a slice which another lad could not eat."

About this time, and even later, it was all beer drinking in Swinton. Beer was taken into the field for the Sunday School children to drink at the Whitsuntide festivities. Amongst the various churches' records can be found to-day—"So much for beer for the singers, &c., &c." In fact, everything was celebrated with beer. When anyone did a slight service it was rewarded by beer. When Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were married the different school children marched in procession through the village, and afterwards, in their own schools, they were regaled with cheese and bread and ale. And there are records of singers and musicians,

after the annual Sunday School anniversaries, going down to the Bull's Head and spending a certain sum which was allowed by the Church or Chapel for beer.

Previous to the introduction of the police, the surplus of cart fines was paid over to the Church. There were two men appointed to see that the coal carters did their duty and attended to their horses and carts—one on foot and the other on horseback. At that time a very large quantity of coal was carted from Swinton to Manchester—there being no railway. Coal was also carted through Swinton from Little Hulton, Walkden, and all that district; the consequence was these two constables, as we might call them, had plenty of work. Delinquents were often brought before the magistrates, and fined for being drunk and neglecting their horses.

About the year 1827 Longshaw's Mill was fined rather heavily for some breach of the law; this fine did not wholly go to the Church of England, but was divided between the Anglican Church and the different Non-conformist Churches in the district. The Church of England got £5, the Wesleyan Church got £5, and the Unitarians got £5. How many others got a portion I am unable to say.

And now I must bring these Recollections to a close; but before doing so I wish gratefully to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Thomas Leigh, of "Meadow Bank"; "Owd Shepley," of "Pratty Brow"; Mr. Samuel Rawlinson, of Swinton (who has contributed very considerably to the information in these pages); and last, though not least, to the Rev. Alfred Hardy, an old Swinton boy, now a Wesleyan Minister, for editing these "Recollections" for the Press.

PETER HOLLAND.

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